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C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001753

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [CASC](#) [CG](#)

SUBJECT: FARDC ON THE MOVE IN EASTERN DRC

REF: KINSHASA C 1720

Classified By: Poloff Meghan Moore for Reasons 1.5 B and D

1. (C) Summary. The FARDC recently sent up to 2,000 troops to South Kivu and has retaken control of a number of villages in the area of Kalehe and Minova without facing significant resistance. North Kivu, South Kivu and Orientale regional military commanders were called in to Kinshasa to discuss possible plans to launch a three-prong attack on Nkunda. End summary.

FARDC on the Move

2. (C) Over the past two weeks, the FARDC sent up to 2,000 troops to S. Kivu (mostly from the 52nd ex-MLC brigade based in Gbadolite, with some ex-FAC elements from Kinshasa and Bas-Congo). By September 12, S. Kivu Military Regional Commander BG Mabe had retaken control of a number of villages in the area of Kalehe and Minova without facing significant resistance. A Western journalist told poloffs that the Mai Mai commander who captured Minova said he 'walked right in.' On September 15, MONUC military sources reported that troops loyal to Nkunda had vacated positions in Minova a week prior to Mabe's advance. Nkunda's troops, who took their weapons, probably moved northwest towards Hombo (located on the Walikale-Buakvu road) in N. Kivu. There are unconfirmed reports that Nkunda is in the Masisi area. On September 11, a presidential advisor told polcouns that General Kisempia had given BG Mabe permission to advance to the N. Kivu/ S. Kivu border, but ordered him to stay out of N. Kivu for now. On September 11, there were unconfirmed reports that FARDC troops had deployed south and east from Lubutu, Maniema towards Walikale. (Comment: FARDC brigades located in Lubutu are under the control of General Padiri of the 9th Military Region, based in Kisangani, in large due to the incompetence of the Maniema Military Regional Commander BG Widi Mbulu. End comment.) There have been low-level skirmishes for several days in the area of Walikale in N. Kivu between local Mai Mai and Tutsi ex-ANC elements (who have been integrated into the 9th Military Region, and fall under the control of Padiri), and movements of Mai Mai and possibly Interahamwe elements near Butembo (septel).

Eastern Generals Recalled to HQ

3. (C) N. Kivu, S. Kivu and Orientale regional military commanders (Mabe, Obedi and Padiri) were recalled to Kinshasa to discuss possible plans to launch a three-prong attack on Nkunda. Padiri arrived on September 12 and was scheduled to return to Walikale September 15 to help mediate the Mai Mai problem. Obedi and Mabe arrived in Kinshasa September 13, and were reportedly still in town on September 15. DATT told poloff that although the FARDC would like to replace Obedi for incompetence and lack of loyalty and Mabe for talking to the press without cleared talking points, the two will probably remain in place for now. A source in the Presidency, however, speculated to Ambassador and DCM that Mabe will retain his job, and that Obedi may be replaced with an officer affiliated with the Kabila faction from the Bas-Congo Military Region.

Comment

4. (C) It is unclear why Obedi agreed to come to Kinshasa (after he refused twice over the past few months) or what the FARDC plans to do with him now that he is here. He will face tough questions about his loyalty and which of his units the FARDC can count on in a fight against Nkunda. (Nkunda relied heavily on former RCD/G troops from North Kivu in his Bukavu campaign, and Obedi admitted to poloff and DATT that although he is loyal to Kinshasa, 'his troops' may or may not follow his orders.) Obedi continues to be a serious problem for Kinshasa. On the one hand, he is widely seen as at best Nkunda's willing accomplice and Rwanda's dupe, and at worst a traitor. On the other hand, replacing him could anger N. Kivu Governor Serufuli, VP Ruberwa, Rwanda and/or trigger an Nkunda-led offensive on Goma. Replacing Mabe could prove to be equally difficult as the FARDC does not have a good alternate in the wings, and because he has become very popular in both S. Kivu and Kinshasa for his decisive action and public image. Ruberwa's extreme dislike for Mabe and the FARDC's distrust of Obedi may lead to their mutual dismissal,

but for now, the general status quo is likely to continue.  
MEECE